DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 383 320 IR 017 175

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TITLE The Reformation in Foreign Language Instruction.
PUB DATE 95
NOTE 12p.; In: Proceedings of the 1995 Annual National Convention of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT), (17th, Anaheim, CA, 1995); see IR 017 139.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Technology; Electronic Mail; Higher Education; Language Laboratories; Questionnaires; *Second Language Instruction; Surveys; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Education; *Teacher Workshops
IDENTIFIERS Arizona State University; Toolbook

ABSTRACT

This article reports on how foreign language instructors at Arizona State University at Tempe are encouraged and taught to use technology in their teaching. Section one introduces the reasons why technology is helpful for foreign language instruction. Section two describes foreign language instructors' attitude toward using technology in their teaching. The efforts of the foreign language department at the university to improve its teaching via technology are depicted in Section three. Renovated audio-visual, language computing, and mediated classrooms labs are described. A two-week language technology workshop was conducted to train instructors in the use of educational technologies, specifically Toolbook, an authoring program for designing instruction, and electronic mail (e-mail). Instructors' attitudes toward using technologies and their personal assessments of various technologies were surveyed. It was discovered that foreign language instructors were not familiar with technology and seldom used it in their teaching before the workshop. However, they had a very positive attitude about the use of technology in language teaching. An appendix includes the four workshop questionnaires and tables summarizing instructor's attitudes of technology use before and after the workshop, and instructors' self-assessment and attitudes concerning the use of Toolbook and e-mail familiarity. (Contains eight references.) (MAS)

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ED 383 320

Title:

The Reformation in Foreign Language Instruction

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INTRODUCTION

The call for more authentic communication in the language classroom has led to an increasing use of technology. Although technology is a good tool to teach language and culture, it is not yet commonly used by foreign language instructors.

This article reports on how foreign language instructors at Arizona State University at Tempe are encouraged and taught to use technology in their teaching. Section one introduces the reasons why technology is helpful for foreign language instruction. Section two describes foreign language instructors' attitude toward using technology in their teaching. Section three depicts the efforts of the Foreign Language Department at Arizona State University to improve its teaching via technology. In this section, the renovated labs and a two-week language technology workshop are described as well as a study about the instructors' attitude toward using technologies and their self-assessment of some technologies. Finally, further research topics are suggested.

TECHNOLOGIES TO FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

A common complaint of foreign language students is that they can not communicate with native speakers after they have studied the language for several years. During the last decades, the Grammar Translation teaching method, which stresses students' spelling, reading, translating, and writing ability, has been replaced by the communicative method of language teaching, which considers oral communication as the ultimate goal of language teaching (Celce-Murcia & McIntosh, 1984; Long & Richards, 1987). This approach emphasizes that the language that is taught is of a functional nature, spoken in a natural and informal manner (Slaton, 1989).

Instructors using the communicative method are preparing learners to survive in the target language environment; therefore, students need to be exposed to authentic materials in order to be able to react appropriately in real situations. Technologies make this possible; videotape and videodisc enable learners to listen to the authentic language that is used in real situations. Also, they allow learners to be exposed to the verbal and non-verbal behaviors of the foreign culture, such as greeting (Schneider, 1982). Saint-Leon (1988) indicated that videodisc is a good way to introduce culture. Computer networks, such as E-mail, enable learners to have direct contact with native speakers by writing (Sayers, 1987) and videoconferencing encourages the oral communication between foreign language students and target language speakers (Herbst & Wiesner, 1988).

Besides the goal of the instruction, the linguistic proficiency of a teacher explains why technology is beneficial for foreign language teaching. If a teacher's speech is really fluent, grammatically correct, and untainted by a foreign accent, then the student is truly fortunate (Schneider, 1982); however, in reality, very few teachers are so competent. Then native speakers' language which can be found on audio tapes, videotapes, and videodisks would be advantageous.

Moreover, the pedagogical proficiency of a foreign language teacher is limited to certain extent no matter how experienced the teacher is (Schneider, 1982). S/he might go too quick or too slow. However, the computer-assisted instruction (CAI) allows students to learn a language at their own pace. Furthermore, because different teachers have different criteria for students' answers and different attitudes toward students' errors, the students' learning can be affected. Technology allows a learner's mistakes to be a secret between the learner and the computer. Thus, learners are not discouraged.

The levels of students also explain why technology is helpful in foreign language teaching (Schneider, 1982). It happens frequently that in a class the ability of some students is high and that of others is low. All students can benefit from technology-based instruction that is interactive and individualized.

From the above, we see that, considering the instructional goal, teachers' proficiency, and students' competence levels, technology is useful in foreign language instruction.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTORS' ATTITUDE TOWARD USING TECHNOLOGY

Foreign language instructors are in favor of using technology in their teaching because technology provides authentic teaching materials and allows learners to be exposed more fully to cultures of target languages (Hill, 1991; Herbst & Wiesner, 1992). Nevertheless, currently few instructors use technology in their teaching. They are afraid because they are not familiar with it. They also do not have enough access to equipment.

Suki Heath conducted a survey to find out what teachers thought about authentic (satellite) television, and how widely it was being used (Hill, 1991). Ninety-three percent of the respondents stated that they would like to use authentic television more than they do at present. One striking theme to emerge from the survey was "the almost unanimous enthusiasm for authentic television" (p. 10). However, "Lack of available material, inadequate access to equipment . . . were the most frequently quoted constraints" (p. 10).

Saint-Leon (1988) found that ". . . using authentic materials requires that the teaching be adjusted to the materials rather than the materials to the teaching. Such an approach goes against tradition in many ways and therefore requires considerable adjustment" (p. 38). She also pointed out that instructors often have difficulty integrating the video programs into the curriculum.

From the above, we see that foreign language instructors have a positive attitude toward using technology in their teaching. Nevertheless, they need to be provided with the necessary equipment and have to be trained how to use technology effectively and how to integrate it into their instruction.

THE REFORMATION AT ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

Due to the need to integrate technology with language teaching, the Foreign Language Department at Arizona State University renovated the language learning lab in 1992. The new labs were effective in spring of 1994. In summer of 1994, a technology language workshop was held to train the instructors in this department.

The Renovated Labs

The new language learning technologies include an audio-visual lab, a language computing lab, and six mediated classrooms. These technologies not only allow students to learn languages by using multimedia software, but also enable instructors to develop multimedia programs.

The Audio-Visual Lab

Fifty-six booths are in this lab and each booth has an audio control panel and a video monitor. Students' cassette tape recorders are in a separate room where the instructors can simultaneously duplicate 56 cassette tapes at high speed. Before class, an instructor can quickly download material into the students' tapes. The audio control panel in each booth allows the student to control his (her) tape. Of course, the instructor can control the students' activities whenever he (she) wants to.

A student can learn a language not only by listening, but also can learn the culture by watching a video on a video monitor. There is a "hot seat" among every four students in the same row. The student on the "hot seat" has a video control panel that allows him (her) to control the video images on the monitors of the four students. S/he can freely rewind a videotape and have a small group discussion with the other three learners.

The Language Computing Lab

Fifty-six computers locate in this lab and each computer has a headphone and a CD-ROM drive. Students can view multimedia programs, write E-mail, and search for information in Internet via Gopher, Mosaic and Netscape. Toolbook packages for learning different languages are available in this lab. The equipment here also allows instructors to design and produce their own instruction.

A special equipment, the TECH Commander, allows an instructor to view the screen of an individual student and take control of the screen. Thus, the teacher and the learner can watch the same screen and discuss what is on the screen by headphones. The instructor can also let students view what is on his/er screen and provide instruction. A computer with a video overlay card and the TECH Commander enables all students to watch a videotape program on their computer screens. A special software installed in some computers allows students with visual problems to enlarge letters on their monitors, and some hardware also is provided for hearing-impaired learners.

The Mediated Classrooms

A mediated classroom consists of a multimedia computer, a video monitor, and a video projector. The Rauland-Borg Ranger Media Management System can distribute video and multimedia-computer capabilities to this classroom (on the second floor) from a control room (in the basement) where all material sources are stored. Thus, an instructor does not have to bring those sources (videotapes, laser discs, or CDs) to class, but s/he can control these materials. The other six mediated classrooms are about to be completed and all presentation materials will be generated and distributed from the control room by computer programs.

The Language Technology Workshop

Description

In addition to the renovation of the labs and classrooms, the department also held a workshop to train instructors to use these technologies in their teaching. The workshop was held by Dr. Dan Brink right after the semester ended, from May 16 to May 27, 1994. The purpose of the two-week workshop was to train the instructors in the Foreign Language Department to be aware of the new technologies and be willing to use them in their teaching. Instructors in the department were not required to take part in the workshop, but encouraged to attend, and coordinators of language sections were strongly recommended to participate in it.

Every day, the workshop began with an orientation meeting, followed by presentations and discussion from 9:00 a.m. to noon, and hands-on practice from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. in the computer lab. In the afternoon, the instructors defined themselves as beginners or advanced learners and received different tasks which were related to what they learned in the morning. During the afternoon, Dr. Brink and two teaching assistants helped the instructors individually.

Toolbook and E-mail were the main focus of the workshop. Toolbook, like HyperCard, is an authoring program which allows instructors to design instruction. On the first morning, the presenter (Dr. Brink) introduced the workshop, the language learning labs and classrooms, Toolbook basics, and Internet basics. On the second day, the participants learned to operate the equipment in the mediated classroom, E-mail basics, and Toolbook primer. More E-mail and Toolbook basics were taught at the third session. On the fourth morning, the participants listened to a talk about using E-mail in Spanish classes, discussed their homework, and learned importing and screen design. On the last day of the first week, the participants watched some sample programs, learned about the Internet, and experienced multimedia.

The second week started with designing flowcharts and discussing a Toolbook project to teach passive voice. In the seventh session, a sample project of teaching French was demonstrated and getting sound into Toolbook was introduced. On the eighth morning, the participants got acquainted with the "humanistic" approach of language instruction and computer conferencing. The next day was devoted to colors, instructional design models, and sound clips. On the last day, some useful features of Toolbook such as scripts were introduced.

Participants

There were twelve participants in the workshop: one German professor, two Italian professors, two Spanish professors, four French professors, two ESL (English as a Second Language) professors, and one English Linguistic professor. Most of them are coordinators of different language sections and can considerably influence other instructors. They are experienced language professors; all but two have taught language for more than 10 years and five of them for even more than 25 years. Five of the twelve participants attended the workshop for one week and seven of them stayed for two weeks.

Getting acquainted with technology, improving teaching techniques, learning to develop language software, and incorporating technology into language teaching were the instructors' motivation to attend the workshop.

Methodology of the Study

Four questionnaires were distributed to the participants before, at the end of the first week, and at the end of the second week of the workshop. The first and second questionnaires, which were filled out by the participants before the workshop, were designed to check their technology background and attitude toward using technology in language teaching (see Questionnaire I & II in Appendix). The technologies mentioned in the questionnaires include E-Mail, computers, digital technology and analog technology. The participants ranked from one to five the strength of their attitude, one for the lowest and five for the highest.

At the end of the first week, the participants answered the third questionnaire that was to investigate their self-assessment of their learning in the first week. Their Toolbook and E-mail basics' familiarity, attitude of using these technologies in foreign language teaching, and feelings of using them in their own teaching were studied (see Questionnaire III in Appendix).

At the end of the workshop, the seven participants who stayed for the second week filled in the fourth questionnaire. This questionnaire was not only used to look at the self-assessment of their learning, but also used to compare their attitude toward using technologies in teaching before and after the workshop (see Questionnaire IV in Appendix).

The ranking numbers were averaged (see Tables in Appendix). The difference between the average of the first week and the second week was investigated. The tables also show the average of all respondents and the average of the participants who stayed for the second week.

Results & Discussion

The responses of the first questionnaire revealed that most of the participants were not familiar with the technology. Six of them (55%) knew nothing about E-Mail; four of them (36%) knew some E-Mail basics; only one of them (9%) was familiar with different systems of E-Mail. As to their general computer background, five of them (45%) did not know anything about computers; four of them (36%) knew some basics about Windows or Mac; one (9%) was well-versed with various applications. and one (9%) considered himself as a programmer. One professor did not respond to the questions.

The responses also showed that technology was not heavily used by the instructors. None of them used E-Mail in their teaching. Only one of them had studied instructional design or ever used digital technology; three of them employed analog technology in their teaching.

Although the participants were not familiar with technology and also did not use technology in their teaching significantly, their attitude toward using technology in language teaching was very positive. Table 1 in Appendix indicates that the participants ranked their attitude above average, when asked what they thought of using the technologies in language teaching before the workshop.

One professor responded, "It is necessary for the teacher to use it or to be old fashioned. We are in era of the technology." Another participant stated, "I think it can be very useful, even though I probably do not completely understand or know its full potential." Another professor answered, "I am anxious to incorporate this technology in my teaching. I think it will be extremely helpful."

Some professors preferred digital technology to analog technology because they could have access to images easily and obtain better quality images. One professor mentioned, "I prefer digital [technology] because I like something clear and neat." Another professor also expressed, "Sound quality [of the digital technology] is superior to [that of the] analog. . . . I get tired of cleaning tape recorder heads and still having bad quality, but it is easier to copy." Low cost and easy access are advantages of analog technology. A professor mentioned that analog technology is "cheap and readily available," but finding the exact segments s/he wanted is difficult.

The responses of the third questionnaire, which was filled out by the participants at the end of the first week, revealed that the instructors were not very confident about the knowledge they learned during that week. The average of Toolbook basics was 3.2 and the one of E-mail was only 2.8 (see Table 2 in Appendix). Nevertheless, the instructors' attitude about using the technologies in teaching was not affected by their knowledge about them. They had very positive attitude toward using Toolbook in language teaching and thought that they would use it in their own teaching.

The attitude toward using E-Mail was not as positive as the one toward using Toolbook because the subjects and levels that the participants teach would affect the instructors to use this technology. The linguistics professor said, "I'm not convinced that all-English-speaking classes in linguistics would benefit." Another professor stated, "It can be useful for some high classes." The professors who ranked it high thought that E-Mail allows learners to be exposed to cultures when students write to native speakers.

Seven professors stayed at the workshop in the second week. All of the average numbers in the third column of table 2 were higher than the ones in the first-week columns (see Table 2 in Appendix). These results indicate that these instructors felt more confident on their knowledge about Toolbook and E-mail at the end of the second week than at the end of the first week. The Toolbook familiarity average rose slightly from 3.0 to 3.4 and the average of the attitude also rose from 4.3 to 4.5. All of the respondents thought that they would use Toolbook in their own teaching at the end of the second week. The E-mail familiarity average jumped from 2.7 to 3.9, and the average of the attitude also rose from 3.9 to 4.3. The average of using E-mail in their own teaching went from 3.4 up to 3.9.

The results in Table 1 indicate that the instructors' general attitude toward using these technologies in language teaching after the workshop was not much different from the one before the workshop. The average of the instructors' attitude toward using E-mail in teaching slightly went from 4.0 to 4.3. Their average response to digital technology and analog technology before and after the workshop was about the same. The average of their attitude toward using computers dropped slightly from 4.5 down to 4.3. Since the difference was due to only one participant's response, the change was not considered significant. The researcher thought that the unchanged post-workshop attitude was due to the strong positive attitude the instructors had before the workshop. The majority of the participants thought that the workshop was helpful and similar workshops were needed in the future.

CONCLUSION

From the study, we can tell that the foreign language instructors were not familiar with technology and seldom use technology in their teaching before the workshop. However, they had very positive attitude toward using technology in language teaching. During the workshop, they gained general knowledge of technologies, such as Toolbook, Internet, instruction design, and multimedia. At the end of the workshop, they felt more comfortable about technology and had similar positive attitude toward using it in instruction.

Since the participants had very positive attitude toward technology before they attended the workshop, the study did not reveal the relationship between the participants' knowledge and attitude. It would be helpful for researchers to look at the correlation between instructors' technology knowledge and their attitude. To investigate the instructors' knowledge and attitude one year later would be interesting, too.

There were only twelve participants in this study. It would be beneficial to conduct research on more foreign language instructors to obtain a broader picture of foreign language instructors' familiarity of technology and their attitude toward using technology in teaching. More instructors' technology training programs need to be designed.

Appendix

Questionnaire 1

Language Technology Workshop
Participant Questionnaire:
Name: _____
E-Mail address: _____
Department, mailcode: _____

Self-assessment of E-Mail familiarity (circle one):
none E-mail basics familiar with many systems guru

Have you ever used E-Mail in teaching? _____
If so, give a brief description:

Self-assessment of computing familiarity (circle one):
none windows/Mac basics many applications programmer

Have you ever used a programming language? _____
If so, which one(s):

Have you ever used digital technology in teaching? _____
If so, describe what you did:

Have you ever made significant use of analog technology in teaching (other than visiting the language lab)? _____
If so, describe:

Have you ever studied instructional design? _____
If so, describe:

Which of these activities--or which other activity or activities--would you like to learn more about in this workshop?

Questionnaire 2

Language Technology Workshop
Participant questionnaire II:
Name: _____

What do you think of using E-mail in foreign language teaching? (circle one)

1 2 3 4 5
not useful very useful

Please describe your attitude:

What do you think of using computers in foreign language teaching? (circle one)

1 2 3 4 5
not useful very useful

Please describe your attitude:

What do you think of using digital technology in foreign language teaching? (circle one)

1 2 3 4 5
not useful very useful

Please describe your attitude:

What do you think of using analog technology in foreign language teaching? (circle one)

1 2 3 4 5
not useful very useful

Please describe your attitude:

Questionnaire 3

Language Technology Workshop Name: _____
Participant questionnaire III:

How long have you taught the language? _____

What is your main teaching area? (circle one)

language linguistics literature others:

Please describe your motivation of attending the workshop:

Toolbook and E-mail basics refer to what we learn this week.

Self assessment of Toolbook basics familiarity (circle one):

1 2 3 4 5
not good very good

What do you think of using Toolbook in foreign language teaching (circle one)?

1 2 3 4 5
not good very good

Are you going to design lessons using Toolbook in your teaching (circle one)?

1 2 3 4 5
not good very good

Please explain:

Self assessment of E-mail basics familiarity (circle one):

1 2 3 4 5
not good very good

What do you think of using E-mail in foreign language teaching (circle one)?

1 2 3 4 5
not good very good

Are you going to use E-mail in your teaching (circle one)?

1 2 3 4 5
not good very good

Please explain:

Questionnaire 4

Language Technology Workshop Name: _____
Participant questionnaire IV:

Toolbook and E-mail basics refer to what we learned these two weeks.

Self assessment of Toolbook basics familiarity (circle one):

1	2	3	4	5
not good				very good

What do you think of using Toolbook in foreign language teaching (circle one)?

1	2	3	4	5
not useful				very useful

Are you going to design lessons using Toolbook in your teaching (circle one)?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all				definitely yes

Please explain:

Self assessment of E-mail basics familiarity (circle one):

1	2	3	4	5
not good				very good

What do you think of using E-mail in foreign language teaching (circle one)?

1	2	3	4	5
not useful				very useful

Are you going to use E-mail in your teaching (circle one)?

1	2	3	4	5
not at all				definitely yes

Please explain:

What do you think of using computers in foreign language teaching? (circle one)

1	2	3	4	5
not useful				very useful

What do you think of using digital technology in foreign language teaching? (circle one)

1	2	3	4	5
not useful				very useful

What do you think of using analog technology in foreign language teaching? (circle one)

1	2	3	4	5
not useful				very useful

What do you think of having another language technology workshop?

1	2	3	4	5
not necessary				definitely necessary

Suggestions for a coming workshop (use the page at the back if necessary):

Table 1
The Instructors' Attitude of Using Technologies before and after the Workshop

	Before the Workshop		After Workshop
	Average of all Respondents	Average of 7 Participants	
E-mail	4.0	4.0	4.3
Computers	4.5	4.5	4.3
Digital Technology	4.6	4.7	4.7
Analog Technology	4.1	3.8	4.1

Note:
Average of 7 participants = average of the participants who stayed at the workshop for the second week

Table 2
The Instructors' Self Assessment of Toolbook and E-mail Familiarity and Attitude of Using them at the End of the First Week and at the End of the Second Week

		At the End of the 1st Week		At the End of the 2nd Week
		Average of all Respondents	Average of 7 Participants	
Toolbook	Know	3.2	3.0	3.4
	Attitude	4.4	4.3	4.5
	Will use	4.5	4.4	5.0
E-mail	Know	2.8	2.7	3.9
	Attitude	3.8	3.9	4.3
	Will use	3.4	3.4	3.9

Note:
Average of 7 participants = average of the participants who stayed at the workshop for the second week

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